



March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Representative Linda Runbeck, Chair  
Transportation and Regional Governance Policy Committee  
175 State Office Building  
St Paul, MN 55155

RE: HF 1933 / Aeronautics and Airport Zoning

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest aviation organization, representing 320,000 pilots, aircraft owners, and aviation enthusiasts nationwide. On behalf of our over 5,500 members in the State of Minnesota, AOPA is committed to ensuring the safety, future viability, and development of general aviation as an integral part of our national transportation system.

On behalf of AOPA, I am advocating in favor of this legislation due to the current circumstances that affect local municipal airports across Minnesota. Airports are a vital connection to local business, emergency relief, points of access, and the pilot community.

Airport infrastructure must be maintained to a set of safety standards for runway requirements, taxiway and lighting requirements, hangar use requirements, and on- airport land use requirements. An issue that can be easily overlooked is the land use surrounding airports, to include the airspace being used for aircraft approaching and departing. Large and small airports face the same problems; urban sprawl and construction of tall structures like cell towers and wind turbines. As cities grow, available land becomes more difficult to maximize and airports are eventually encroached upon creating a slew of problems.

In poor weather conditions, pilots rely on the aircraft instruments to fly a predetermined course to the airport runway via radio beacon signals or GPS based approaches. When tall structures exist near these approaches, the descent minimums are raised, or the approach could be shut down due to safety concerns. These issues directly impact operations at the airport. Safety concerns can be raised or pilots will choose an entirely different airport to operate into, and out of.

AOPA is in favor of strong airport zoning regulations for municipalities across the country. The FAA has established rules regarding the preservation of safe and efficient use of navigable airspace, found in 14 CFR part 77. These regulations have been in place to provide a process for determining hazards to navigable



airspace by means of an airspace study conducted by the FAA. At the state level, policies are in effect that match, or are more stringent than those found under Part 77. Construction permits are granted at the local level, varying from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some local jurisdictions are more in tune with airport zoning restrictions, other not so much.

This legislation would require airport safety zones depicted on control maps, give the ability for custom standards based on local needs, reviewed by a joint airport zoning board. The legislation will provide a streamlined process during the permit application, allowing for only one public hearing, unless changes are made, rather than two. These public hearing notices are costly to taxpayers when running advertisements in two newspapers, this legislation will cut that to one newspaper and allow for online viewing. The legislation will make MNDOT accountable for reviewing cases within 90 days, right now there is no time limit.

This proposed legislation was built upon the fact that airports are an essential part of public service. The local airport and its neighbors can coexist much more efficiently and friendly when the policies and laws work to create an environment that reduces the burden of each. Realizing that forced zoning may close an airport due to choices of land use by the governing authority, this legislation provides workable solutions that can be tailored to each community.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely

Kyle Lewis

*Regional Manager for Government Affairs and Airport Advocacy / Great Lakes Region, AOPA*

CC:

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